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Organic Fruit Growers Survey

- About 190 certified organic fruit producers from 9 major fruit-producing States were surveyed in 1995. Most had become certified in the last 10 years.
- The majority of organic growers had at least some college education and 60 percent of the organic growers (and 63 percent of their spouses) worked entirely on the farm.
- Most of the surveyed organic growers scouted their fields and used mechanical tillage for weed control. Other important production practices included using composted manure and plant materials and planting legumes to increase available soil nitrogen.

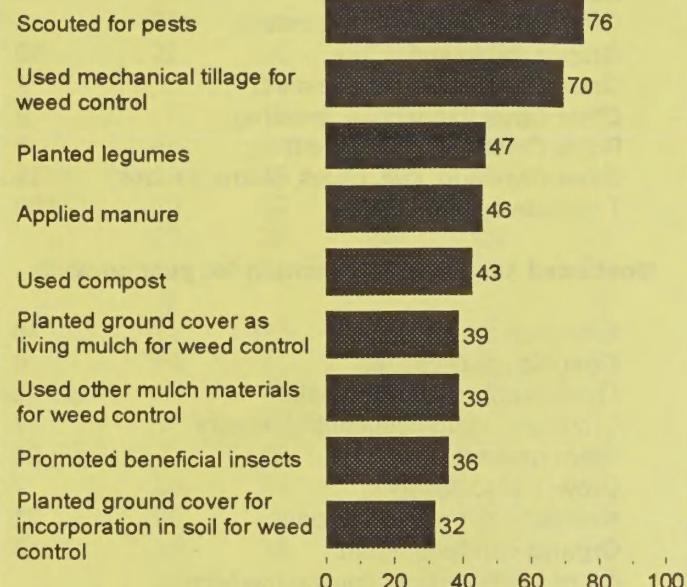
Organic farming involves using biological and cultural methods of pest management and organic materials and processes for nutrient management, virtually excluding synthetic chemicals. Organic certification services were provided in 1994 by 42 State and private programs.

The sample of 190 organic fruit growers represented nearly 15 percent of all certified organic fruit growers (total estimated from Dunn, J.A., *Organic Food and Fiber: An Analysis of 1994 Certified Production in the United States*, USDA, Agricultural Marketing Serv., Sept. 1995). However, the survey findings may not be representative of the total because only a partial list of organic growers was available at the time of the survey. The organic survey was part of the 1995 Fruit Chemical Use Survey conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service in major fruit-producing States.

The crops most widely grown by the surveyed organic growers were apples and wine grapes, followed by blueberries, oranges, pears, and peaches (table 1). The top three States in number of organic fruit farmers surveyed were California (48 percent of surveyed growers), Oregon (20 percent), and Washington (20 percent). Other States with surveyed organic growers were Florida, Georgia, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Selected pest and nutrient management practices used by organic fruit growers, 1995

(Percent answering affirmatively)



Source: USDA, ERS, based on 1995 Fruit Chemical Use Survey.

Organic fruit growers marketed their fruit through a processor (23 percent), broker, packer or shipper (23 percent), directly to the consumer (17 percent), or directly to a natural food retailer (12 percent). Almost 60 percent of the growers surveyed had less than 10 acres while only 16 percent had more than 50 acres.

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About AREI UPDATES

AREI UPDATES is a periodic series that supplements and updates information in Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators (AREI), USDA, ERS, AH-705, Dec. 1994. UPDATES report recent data from surveys of farm operators and others knowledgeable about changing agricultural resource use and conditions, with only minimal interpretation or analysis. Please contact the individual listed at the end of the text for additional information about the data in this UPDATE. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have other questions about AREI UPDATES or AREI, contact Richard Magleby, (202) 219-0436. [rmagleby@econ.ag.gov]. AREI UPDATES are available on the ERS web site—<http://www.econ.ag.gov/Briefing/arei/arei.htm>—and on AutoFax (202) 219-1107 (wait until voice prompt gives all options, then press 4; when prompted again, enter 20200 and 20300 to get listings of available issues for 1996 and 1997).

Table 1—Operational characteristics of surveyed organic fruit growers, 1995

Characteristic	Percent of growers	Characteristic	Percent of growers
Main organic crop produced:		State:	
Apples (fresh)	18	California	48
Apples (processed)	7	Florida	5
Apricots and peaches (fresh and processed)	7	Georgia	*
Blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, sweet and tart cherries (fresh and processed)	16	Michigan	3
Dates and figs	4	New Jersey	*
Grapefruit (fresh and processed)	4	New York	2
Grapes (table and wine)	19	Oregon	20
Oranges (fresh and processed)	7	Pennsylvania	*
Other citrus (tangerines, lemons)	2	Washington	20
Pears (fresh and processed)	6	Total surveyed ¹	100
Other (avocado, kiwi, olives, plums, prunes)	11		
Total surveyed ¹	100		
Most used source of information for pest control:		Attended extension courses in past year	
Extension advisors	16		42
Extension publications	6		
Farm supply/chemical dealer	5		
Crop consultant/pest control advisor	7		
Other growers	23		
Grower association	7		
Newsletters, trade magazines	21		
Organic certifying agent	13		
Other (commercial scouting service, processor, radio, TV, special event or demonstrations)	3		
Total surveyed ¹	100		
Marketing channel most used:		Size of organic acreage:	
Consumer direct	17	Less than 1 acre	16
Direct to natural food retailer	12	1 - 4.9 acres	29
Food service industry (restaurant, deli, etc.)	*	5 - 9.9 acres	14
Grocery retailer	3	10-49.9 acres	25
Broker, packer, or shipper	23	50 acres and over	16
Grower cooperative	7	Total surveyed ¹	100
Processor	23		
Grocery chain distributor (Safeway, Kroger, Giant, etc.)	*		
Other grocery wholesaler/distributor	10		
Other	3		
Total surveyed ¹	100		

¹Percent may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

*One percent or less

Source: USDA, ERS, based on the 1995 Fruit Chemical Use Survey.

Table 2—Pest and nutrient management practices used by surveyed organic growers of selected fruit crops, 1995

Practice used	All ¹	Apples ²	Berries ³	Citrus ⁴	Grapes ⁵
Percent of organic growers using practice					
Nutrient management practices:					
Planted legume crops to increase soil nitrogen	47	53	24	42	70
Applied manure to the organic crop acres	46	53	44	63	35
Used compost	43	36	48	50	45
Pest management practices:					
Used pheromones to disrupt insect mating	23	53	*	*	*
Purchased and released beneficial organisms for insect control	20	24	10	33	13
Planted crops to establish habitats for beneficial insects	36	29	24	13	58
Used bacterial pathogens (Bt) for insect control	27	56	17	*	*
Used viral pathogens (granulosis virus) for insect control	5	12	*	*	*
Planted trap crops for insect control	9	18	*	*	*
Planted ground cover as living mulch for insect control	28	29	17	13	45
Planted ground cover to be incorporated into soil for insect control	22	35	*	21	33
Used other mulch materials for insect control	28	12	17	*	*
Used mechanical tillage for insect control	26	26	24	29	28
Selected insect-resistant varieties	14	12	*	*	28
Used soil biological testing for insect control	8	*	*	*	18
Used leaf analysis for insect control	14	15	*	17	13
Planted ground cover as living mulch for disease control	16	21	14	13	20
Planted ground cover to be incorporated into soil for disease control	17	29	14	13	25
Used other mulch materials for disease control	11	15	17	*	*
Used mechanical tillage for disease control	26	24	24	25	25
Selected disease-resistant varieties	20	21	14	*	30
Used soil biological testing for disease control	26	*	*	*	18
Used leaf analysis for disease control	16	12	*	17	20
Planted ground cover as living mulch for weed control	39	50	28	25	40
Planted ground cover to be incorporated into soil for weed control	32	35	31	25	40
Used other mulch materials for weed control	39	32	52	25	15
Used mechanical tillage for weed control	70	62	45	75	93
Number of growers					
Number of organic growers surveyed	190 ¹	34	29	24	40

¹ Includes other fruit crops not listed on this table.

² Fresh market.

³ Includes blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, sweet and tart cherries (fresh and processed).

⁴ Includes oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, and lemons.

⁵ Wine and table grapes.

*Less than 10 percent.

Source: USDA, ERS, based on the 1995 Fruit Chemical Use Survey.

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Table 3—Characteristics of surveyed organic fruit growers, 1995

Operator characteristic	Percent of growers	Operator characteristic	Percent of growers
Year that grower became certified:		Days grower worked off farm per year:	
1970 - 75	3	0	60
1976 - 80	3	1 - 99	8
1981 - 85	12	100 - 199	10
1986 - 90	51	200 - 360	23
1991 - 95	32	Total surveyed ¹	100
Total surveyed ¹	100		
Age of grower, years:		Days grower's spouse worked off farm per year:	
25 - 35	7	0	63
36 - 45	34	1 - 99	6
46 - 55	31	100 - 199	7
56 - 65	12	200 - 360	25
66 - 80	15	Total surveyed ¹	100
Total surveyed ¹	100		
Years grower has operated the farm:		Grower grew up on farm	51
1 - 5	8		
6 - 10	17		
11 - 15	22		
16 - 20	21		
21 - 25	14		
26 - 30	5		
31 and over	13		
Total surveyed ¹	100		
Education of grower:		Primary occupation of grower:	
Less than high school (HS)	5	Farm operator	68
Completed high school	12	Hired farm manager	6
Vocational training after HS	3	Nonfarm work	26
Some college	28	Total surveyed ¹	100
Completed college	35		
Graduate school	17		
Total surveyed ¹	100		

¹Percent may not add up to 100 because of rounding

Source: USDA, ERS, based on the 1995 Fruit Chemical Use Survey.

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